

**Suggested Remarks  
For CDA Darryl Johnson  
EQuALLS Books Turn Over Ceremony  
Jose Rizal Elementary School  
Lamitan East District, Basilan  
August 23, 2005  
10:45 a.m.**

Mr. Roderick Furigay, Mayor of Lamitan, and other  
local officials;

Dr. Omar Aranan, Basilan Schools Superintendent;

Mr. Abdulsali Asaali, Basilan Schools Assistant  
Superintendent;

Ms. Editha Molina, Principal, Jose Rizal Elementary  
School;

Ms. Pilarita Dahandal, Principal, Lamitan National  
High School;

Mr. Jessie Baki, President, Parent-Teacher-  
Community Association, Jose Rizal Elementary  
School;

Mr. Malik Uyag, President, Parent-Teacher-Community  
Association, Lamitan National High School;

Distinguished guests;

Parents, Teachers and Students;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Greetings of peace to everyone.

I thank the local and school officials and the children for the warm welcome you accorded us today. It is always a pleasure to visit schools and mingle with school children.

Today we are adding another significant event to our long and unique history of friendship and cooperation. The history of United States government support for education in the Philippines started more than a century ago, with the coming to the Philippines of American volunteer teachers known as 'Thomasites'. Today's turn over of books, affirms and continues that long tradition of mutual cooperation of Americans and Filipinos to help

ensure that children have an equal opportunity to education.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS) Project, provides assistance to help more children in the ARMM and other conflict and poverty-affected areas of Mindanao have access to high quality basic education.

The books and learning materials we are handing over today are part of our larger education program for Basilan, as the School Superintendent and the Principal may know. Through the support of your Department of Education - Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DepED-ARMM) officials present here, USAID is helping improve the capacity of teachers to teach the foundation subjects of math,

science, reading and English, and our focus is on the foundation grades, Grade 1-3.

We are also working to improve the access of youth and young adults who are not in school or unemployed to obtain education through non-formal means such as in the alternative learning system or ALS, and providing them with vocational training and job referrals.

We are assisting *madaris* to teach the standard DepEd school curriculum, particularly strengthening of instruction of math, science and English.

The EQuALLS Project also supports government policy makers and local leaders' various initiatives for education policy reform. In so doing, we can help strengthen the institutional capacity of government and local school administrators and educators to deliver quality education services.

The EQuALLS Project is a partnership among the U.S. Government, the Philippine government, the private sector, NGOs, and the schools and communities we serve. Only by bringing together the resources, knowledge and commitment of all the partners are we able to make a real difference.

These EQuALLS initiatives have been implemented, or will soon be implemented in your school, Jose Rizal Elementary School, and in the nearby Lamitan National High School.

Finally, allow me to express appreciation to Mayor Furigay of Lamitan, who I understand, has been very supportive of the EQuALLS effort particularly in providing transportation and local counterpart support to EQuALLS activities; and to the local DepED-ARMM leadership (led by Superintendent Aranan), who I am told, has been enthusiastically

supporting and providing valuable cooperation in implementing project activities.

Let us continue working together to eliminate the worst form of poverty – the poverty of the mind. With the commitment of local DepED-ARMM, local government executives, the parents and the community leaders, in educating today's children, we can never fail. And to you children, I say, please read these books and enjoy the excitement of learning.

Thank you.

